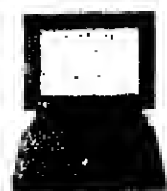


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A look at Arabic computer magazines

By Zeid Nasser
Star Staff Writer

IF YOU manage to visit a good bookshop this month, you might be surprised at the number of Arabic computer magazines on offer. It seems as though our bookshelves have suddenly filled with these magazines, and the thing that strikes you first is that none of them are Jordanian. These magazines deserve a look and we're going to start this week with two of them.

Let's start with Al-Computer & Electronics, a Saudi magazine published by Dar Al-Sayyad International which is the oldest magazine of the bunch. The magazine has undergone a lot of development over the years and currently leads the Saudi market, which includes a very big readership, and is said to lead the market all over the region. What's it like? Well, of course, there's a lot of emphasis on the Saudi market which is quite active; you can count on it to always report on the latest products and has recently been including a special supplement for beginners.

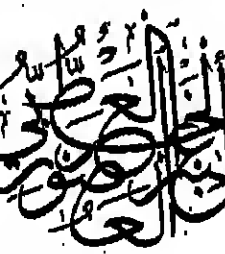
Al-Computer & Electronics is the kind of magazine that should satisfy all your needs, but its sections are not arranged in a relaxing manner for the reader, while articles and news pages seem to lack a proper design. This results in solid blocks of text spread out all over the page. The magazine is also very technical. It should find admiration among the professional computer community, but I don't know if normal home users would enjoy it. Having said this, the truth must be told that there are lots of advertisements and announcements which can really help the user and could serve as a monthly computer directory. However, you'd have to be living in the Gulf to make use of such features.

PC users should especially enjoy the magazine since it offers very comprehensive coverage of the latest in the PC world. It has around 60 pages, mostly made out of news including the latest developments, reviews of the latest products and interesting articles.

Apple magazine is the second magazine we're going to be looking at. It's published by Photosetting Ltd, based in London and reports on the news of the regional Macintosh market. This magazine is jointly financed by Apple dealers all over the region to satisfy the need for a dedicated Apple magazine on the market since all



أبل الكمبيوتر



the other magazines, Al-Computer & Electronics included, focus on the IBM PC & compatibles market.

The magazine gets top marks for design and arrangement of contents making it very enjoyable to read. The paper is of good quality and the font used in the text is considerably sized and is

relaxing to the eye. It includes well written articles which are in some cases very technical, but have a general tendency to be simple. Lots of news and reviews of the latest Mac products are included and there are some helpful technical advice pages.

The magazine is of superior design, yet it doesn't seem to have the major characteristic Al-Computer & Electronics has. It does not really serve Mac users as a directory of all the latest products and where and how to get them which, in my humble opinion, is slowly becoming a major factor for the success of many other computer magazines all over the world. Still, it's a young magazine which should be encouraged by Mac users all over the region since it clearly has great potential.

Al-Computer & Electronics is priced at JD 1.50 while Apple Magazine is priced at JD 1.00, both of which are reasonably priced. We hope this will encourage Jordanian computer users to buy the Arabic computer publications leading up to the day when we publish our own computer magazines, which will do us and our local market a lot of good.

Farcus



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News...News...News...News...News...News...News...News

GBM holds seminar on Open Systems

GULF BUSINESS Machines (GBM Jordan) in cooperation with Jordan Computer Society (JCS) held an Executive Conference on Open Systems in the Amman Plaza Hotel on 19 February, 1992. The recent growth of Open Systems has inevitably created many conceptions, ideas and definitions in the information technology arenas. To help customers find their way through the Open Systems maze and un-

derstand IBM's Open System's commitment was the main idea behind organizing this one-day event.

The conference was intended for IT management and professionals. It provided an overview and positioning of IBM's products and strategies for Open Systems. It was presented by Mr Steve Bates, European Open Systems Center in London and included the history, origins and defini-

tions of Open Systems. It also included information on IBM strategy and products and compliance with industry standards. Mr Bates also spoke of the major players of the market. Two sessions were held: a morning session for the professional participants including a fee reception and an evening session addressing DP executives including cocktail reception.

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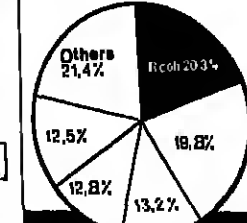
Prices: Jordan: JD 250, Egypt: LE 100, Kuwait: KD 400, Saudi Arabia: SR 300, Qatar: QR 300, UAE: DR 300
Subscriptions: (annual) Jordan JD 12, Arab countries US\$ 75, W. Europe: US\$ 150, USA & Canada US\$ 200.

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اسبوعية سياسية مستقلة

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A non-conventional look at Jordanian affairs:

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JORDANI WEEK

Government dispenses 'bitter medicine'

The government has finally put an end to a spate of rumors when it announced last Sunday its decision to increase the prices of first grade (super) gasoline, diesel oil and fuel oil for industry. In an emotional announcement "a responsible source" said the new measures come in fulfillment of the 18-month long economic adjustment program. The source said these increases conclude the government's economic and fiscal measures for this year, meaning that the citizens should not expect any more increases for the rest of 1992.

The decisions were announced on the eve of yet another snow blizzard which hit the country on Monday. Many Jordanians believed the announcement was ill-timed. A government source said the decision was postponed for at least two months because of bad weather, but IMF pressures and with only a few weeks for Ramadan, it was decided to announce the increases now.

While the majority of Jordanians were happy that the price of regular gasoline did not change, many were shocked at the 40 per cent increase in the price of heating oil. The "responsible source" said only 10 per cent of fuel oil (solar) goes for heating Jordanian homes and that the rest is used by trucks for overland freight. The government sought to cushion the rise in heating oil by paying a compensation of no more than JD 100 during this year to those whose income does not exceed JD 300 monthly. But

the source did not explain how those eligible can claim their compensation. The government will also compensate bakeries to sustain the price of bread. Farmers who use fuel oil-powered pumps will also be compensated. According to the same source, the latest measures will help Jordan reschedule most of its debts for 1992 and the first half of 1993, while increasing the kingdom's foreign currency reserves and maintaining the stability of the Jordanian dinar.

A Ministry of Supply order was issued the same day adjusting the prices of first grade gasoline, heating oil and fuel oil as follows:

First grade gasoline 300 fils/liter.

Heating oil (solar) 105 fils/liter.

Fuel oil JD 65/ton, except for the electric sector which will continue to purchase its oil at JD 41,400/ton.

While most Jordanians have been preparing themselves for Sunday's news, most are now worried about the ripple effects of the latest measures especially on the cost of living in general, prices of commodities and certain services and people's purchasing power.

The government tried to recruit the support of deputies to its latest decision, but only few deputies came out publicly in favor. The Lower House was expected to debate the measures Wednesday. Some deputies accused the government of breaking its past promise of prior consultation with the House before adopting austerity measures. By mid-week and as a fresh snow storm hit the



I promise you that if they ban liquor and I am sober again never to vote for any of them

Shihni

country, it was clear that the government's move was becoming deeply unpopular.

Prohibition stirs controversy

A witty Lower House deputy dubbed it "The Black Label" session, referring to last Wednesday's vote by the House endorsing a Legal Committee recommendation to ban liquor and calling on the government to prepare a draft law to that effect.

The motion was adopted by 34 votes in favor and 20 against. Only 54 of the 80 deputies attended the session. A number of those who attended withdrew before the voting took place. They included Christian and secular deputies. Their withdrawal gave the Islamist deputies total control of the heated debates that took place. Only two deputies who are also Legal Committee members, Muhammad Farris Al Tarawneh and Farris Al Nabulsi, put up a strong fight against the proposal calling it unconstitutional.

Deputy Sheikh Abdel Baqi Jammo defended the proposal and said that even if the liquor

industry supports the budget and creates jobs, other avenues should be tried to battle unemployment.

The proposal calls on the government to prepare a draft law banning the consumption, manufacturing and trading of liquor in Jordan. The government should now by law prepare such a draft, but this could take months, if not years of legal haggling. Even if the draft law is sent to parliament, it would need a two-thirds majority to pass by both the Lower and Upper houses.

Observers say last week's motion and the ensuing controversy should not reflect negatively on Jordan's democratic process. "The Islamists pushed for the debate to satisfy their electorate. It's a stunt, that's all," said one political analyst. "It is now up to the government and to the 38 million liquor industry to fight back and they have many strong arguments on their side."

A government official said that that world should not see this event as a tilt towards extremism by Jordan. "Such a move (by the Islamists) was expected," he said. "We could not object to it at this stage because we (the

government) are not involved in this stage. But we will be from now on."

Foreign debts reduced

Central Bank of Jordan (CB) Governor Dr Mohammad Saeed Nabulsi has said that Jordan's foreign debts have fallen to about \$7 billion from \$8.3 billion two years ago. He estimated CB's foreign currency reserves at \$750 million in addition to another \$1 billion held by commercial banks. Dr Nabulsi expected foreign aid to Jordan during this year to amount to \$400 million. Meanwhile, talks were due to begin this Friday between Jordanian officials and the Paris Club of creditors in the French capital regarding the re-scheduling of \$5 billion Jordan owes to creditors in the club. Dr Nabulsi was reported to have asked to be relieved of his duties on health reasons. No candidates have been named yet, but one source told The Star that Dr Nabulsi's resignation may lead to a wide-scale re-shuffle of posts in the Central Bank.

ArabSat III takes over

Minister of Communications Mr Jamul Al Sarireh flew to France last week to attend the launching of the third satellite for Arab telecommunications, ArabSat III, which was launched from French Guyana on 26 February. ArabSat III will take over from ArabSat I, which was launched in orbit seven years ago. ArabSat II was launched by US shuttle Discovery in June 1985, but has never been operational. The one-ton ArabSat III will be capable of managing 8000 telephone calls and several television transmissions simultaneously.

Expats miss deadline

More than 6100 Kuwaiti-licensed cars have been repatriated by the Amman Customs Dept. until last week, it was reported. The deadline for the final repatriation of about 16,500 cars expired at the end of February but the government is considering an extension because of the snow storm which hit the kingdom last week. But Customs Dept. sources expected more than 4000 Kuwaiti-licensed cars to be re-exported because their owners could not pay customs duty. Most of the new models will be shipped to UAE buyers who then resell the cars to Iraq and Kuwait.

Thieves break into cars

The snow storm brought in Jordan to a halt, except for a few thieves who seized the opportunity and burglarized more than ten cars that were abandoned by their owners on the Queen Alia International Airport highway. The thieves broke into the cars, which included vehicles belonging to foreign embassies, a government minister and a senator, and stole radio-cassettes, lighters, attaché cases, cushions and personal documents. Police are investigating the matter.

Star Staff Writer

WAS the biggest storm in more than seventy years. Some Mediterranean countries regarded it as the storm of the century as more than 80-mph winds swept through the region from the north pole leaving most of eastern Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, northern Iraq and north west Iran under a thick blanket of snow and ice.

Storm of the century paralyzes region

After three days of heavy snow fall, Jordanians began coming out of their besieged homes to an eerie moonscape. Snow was over half a meter deep in most of the hilly and mountainous areas. In some parts of Amman, Irbid and Tafila it reached 1.5 meters. And unlike the last four blizzards, this one defeated all efforts to keep the main roads and arteries of the kingdom open. Jordan was under the paralyzing spell of this storm for three days. Its hypnotic effect

stretched from the isolated north to the cut-off south. Even the lower parts of Amman failed to shed off the 35 centimeter thick skin and its bewildered inhabitants were snowed in for another day after the blizzard's departure.

Then the bulldozers arrived, slicing their way into the fluffy white matter all over the kingdom to open roads and revive the country's arteries, and in doing so they created an almost surrealistic terrain with icy boulders and frozen shapes scattered along the newly-opened roads. It looked like a war zone with craters, trenches and barricades all made of snow that stood defiantly.

Continued on page 5

UPSIDE DOWN... WE TURNED IT

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مركز الفن

By Kate Daniels
Star Staff Writer

Polio outbreak prompts national immunization drive

REPORTS OF a recent outbreak of polio in the kingdom prompted the launching of a massive immunization campaign on Monday by the Ministry of Health. The outbreak, which first emerged in December last year, met the ministry and health authorities with some alarm, especially since Jordan had been declared free of the disease for a number of years. The official number of cases quoted so far has been 32, with 22 of these in the central and northern parts of the Jordan Valley region.

Polio (poliomyelitis) is an infectious, virus-caused disease which largely affects children under the age of five and often results in physical disablement. Since an extensive immunization program was started in 1979

covering polio, measles, diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough vaccinations, there have been no officially reported cases of the disease.

Through constant monitoring of infectious diseases in the kingdom, the Ministry of Health was alerted following clinical suspicions that polio had re-emerged in parts of the Jordan Valley. Dr Adnan Abbas, permanent secretary at the ministry, said that in the light of such fears, a mass vaccination campaign amongst the under-fives was immediately organized in the affected area. This then led to the idea for a nationwide campaign.

"Jordan has been free of the disease for many years, and so a single, confirmed case would constitute an epidemic in our understanding," said Dr Abbas, keen to dispel fears that the disease is reaching ginni proportions.

A confirmed diagnosis that the virus was once again active in the environment came on the 15 February from a World Health Organization (WHO) reference laboratory in the Netherlands. Within only three days, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) sent 1,200,000 doses of vaccine to Jordan, sufficient to protect 600,000 infants.

From there, the Ministry of Health set up an operation room, launched a public information campaign and ensured mass media coverage for their intensive immunization drive. Coordinating with both the WHO and the private sector, the ministry has now established vaccination stations at all of its medical centers and hospitals, and those run by the Royal Medical Services, UNRWA, the Nour Al Hussein Foundation, the Queen Alia Social Welfare Fund, the Ministry of Social Development and other cooperating organizations.

Although the program has been disrupted so far by snow

and adverse weather conditions, the ministry hopes that parents will continue to bring their children to be immunized voluntarily. Thus they have offered the vaccines free of charge to all participants in the campaign on the condition that all vaccines are used, so that none go wasted and no-one is at risk.

Dr Abbas said that the campaign has three specific aims. "Firstly," he said, "we need to vaccinate all infants under the age of five who have not yet received the vaccine. So far, we have a coverage of about 92 per cent of children under one year, and a 98 per cent coverage of children under two years."

The second aim is to revaccinate. "Due to the nature of the vaccine, five percent of children do not develop sufficient immunity. This campaign will allow all children to be revaccinated, including those children who have developed an immunity," he said.

The third aim of the campaign is to diminish the offending virus in the environment. Dr Abbas explained: "When we mass vaccinate the people we increase the amount of 'weak virus' in the environment, which will in turn be sufficient to replace the 'wild virus' which causes the disease. Because the vaccine is given by mouth, it is expelled through faeces, circulates in the sewers and can replace the harmful 'wild virus'."

Reasons behind the recent recurrence of the disease remain vague. Half of the current reported cases apply to children who have not developed sufficient immunity despite having been vaccinated, however Dr Abbas said that as yet the ministry "cannot obviate the possibility that the polio outbreak has come from an outside country where the disease is endemic." The WHO and the US Center for Disease Control have since sent specialists to investigate the causes behind the outbreak.

Outbreaks (such as those in the Jordan Valley) have occurred where immunization coverage has been very high, but Dr Abbas denied that the appearance of cases amongst vaccinated children indicates any failure on the part of medical teams, and added: "There was nothing wrong with the vaccine itself nor the way it was administered."

Dr Abbas described the ministry's campaign as being "a necessary measure to protect people" and said that it required cooperation from people at all levels, from the voluntary actions of parents down to the influence and motivation of the media.

"We don't want to frighten people unnecessarily," he said, "however we do want to achieve 100 percent vaccination of our under-fives target group. WHO sources suggest that a mass campaign such as this is sufficient to stop any further outbreak. People must vaccinate their children — it is something patriotic and humanitarian. And time is the element."

THE
STAR
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Moonscape terrain is legacy of storm

clean their entrances. Others reported to work only to find their places of employment closed or half-empty. Children had a chance to play in the covered fields and open areas, inventing as they went along new games worthy of the occasion.

On the second day after the blizzard the picture was getting

clearer. The same story was everywhere, this event had united us all. Jordan was lucky. Few people were injured, some mud houses had collapsed, there were damages to cars and property, but on a limited scale. Farmers may have been worst hit by the storm as their Jordan Valley fields were flooded and their

crops had rotted before reaching the market.

Electricity was cut off in some parts, but was restored to most areas. Rural roads suffered because of landslides and torrents.

But water officials were not shy to advertise their happiness. They had good news and many statistics. It was the best winter

season since 1922, they declared. Dried-up springs and aquifers returned to life and salty Jordan Valley lands have been washed by rains and made arable again.

But as Jordanians were comparing stories about the last storm, they were also preparing themselves for more snowy weather. In local folklore seven big ones make a white winter complete. ■



TORONTO. SAME DAY

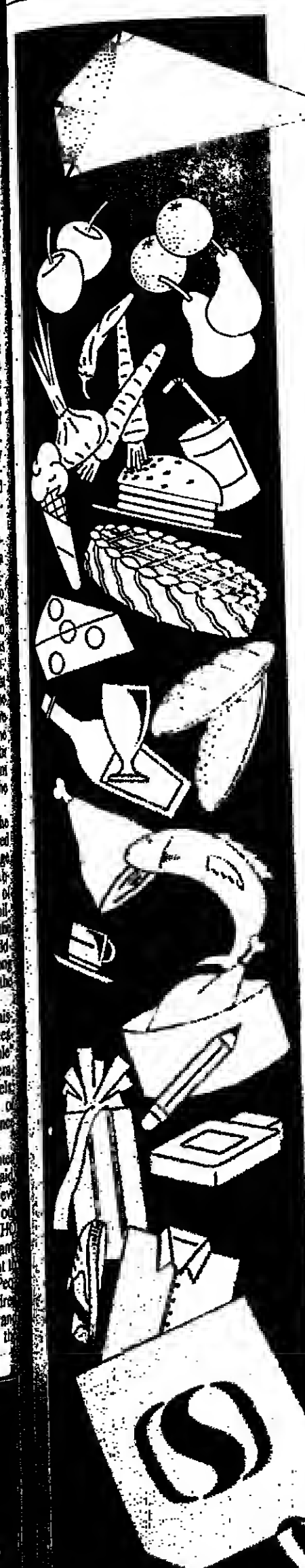
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By Mary Denis
Special to The Star

The unbeatable sound of the Japanese drums ensemble

IF ONE were to characterize Japanese culture in a few words, one could probably say that it has a tendency towards internal austerity, elegance (*uiyabi, sabi*) and tranquillity rather than external excess, impressiveness and intensity, which has thus earned the Japanese a reputation of being inwardly aesthetic, reserved and even unemotional people.

This stereotypical image, however, was shaken off — at least in the field of music — by the dynamic and flamboyant performance of the Japanese Percussion Ensemble, which has just completed its tour of the Gulf States and Jordan. Under the patronage of Their Highnesses Prince Rnad and Princess Majda, the Ryu Ensemble was presented by the National Music Conservatory in cooperation with the Japanese Embassy.

Entitled "Japanese Sounds, Vital Pivots", it was a magnificent display of traditional types of drums, a flute, and a three-stringed lute set against a neat, decorated alcove. Japanese motifs, colorful outfits, shining muscles, vibrant body movements, complimentary lighting — all these made it a truly unique experience.

"The Japanese hear music with their bodies and eyes," explained Jundo Renzan, founder of the Ryu Ensemble and its leading drummer. As a musician who wishes to generate his Japanese spirit into sounds, Renzan says he simply follows his heart beat. He claims that his sticks pick up

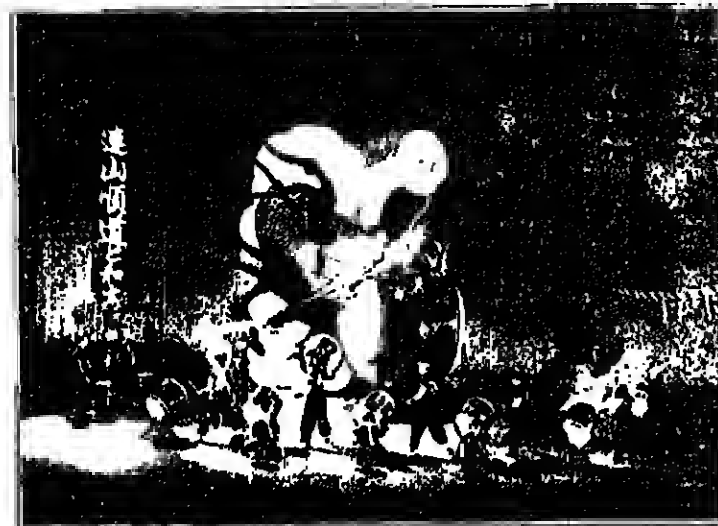
his heart's pulsation, transmit the vibrations to the drums and respond accordingly, interacting with the drums.

He makes it all sound very easy, while, in fact, behind the mastery technique lies many years of intense study and training.

Renzan studied techniques of multiple drumming in the Tokyo 'Sukeroku' style. As a result, he founded his own Oshu Sabane School in 1982. Two years later he founded the Yamagata Prefecture Drum Federation and became a teacher, officially recognized by the Federation of Japanese Drum Groups. Since April 1991 Renzan has given instruction to 32 drumming groups throughout Japan.

Assuming the stage name Wadaiko (drums) Ryu Renzan Jundo, he has earned the reputation as a master of solo performance on the large drum (*dadoiko*), and is considered to be the finest player of this instrument in Japan.

The history of drumming goes well back into the times of early Buddhism in Japan, when drums were traditionally played on ceremonial and religious occasions. Renzan has a great respect for and good knowledge of drums as a traditional instrument. He has creatively adapted the traditional values and features of drumming



The Japanese percussion ensemble: dramatic and flamboyant

to the needs of his Ensemble, thus developing his own style of playing and presentation. It synthesizes high techniques of the rhythm of beat with physical appeal, turning his shows into an exceptional spectacle.

Before striking a beat on their instruments the drummers give swooping, high-spirited shouts. Body movements intensify the emotional atmosphere of the show. The juggling of drum sticks is incorporated into the rhythm and is an important component of the performance. As Renzan explains, an emphasis on timing in one of the characteris-

tics of Japanese traditional music and he integrates it expertly with all the visual effects.

For Renzan, his performances are not just a display of his virtuosity, his main objective is to involve the audience in the spectacle. But how did he achieve this goal in front of a foreign audience? How did he overcome the language barrier, and the lack of "feel" for Japanese music on the part of his audience?

A suitable solution was found in Nabli Sawalla, a well-known theater and TV personality who was asked to present the show. He became a link, a medium

through whom the artists could relate to the audience, while at the same time proving to be a gifted master of ceremonies.

Living proof of the audience's involvement in the show was their participation in the finale, "Sabane-yagi-bushi", a lively arrangement of a traditional Japanese folk song by Renzan for flute (*shamisen*) and drums. Interestingly enough, the rhythm of the piece somehow resembled an Arabic beat, to which the audience spontaneously reacted by joining in with the musicians.

An enigmatic piece entitled "Sounds of Ancient Yamato" depicted the "pulsation" of the 4th century, Japan's most blossoming cultural period, and was also well received.

Wadaiko drums have more than a musical meaning to Renzan, they bind his family together. His wife, Tukeki Tamamura, also plays in the Ensemble. Renzan's two sons, accomplished drummers in their own right, are also a part of the Ryu group.

Renzan's Ryu Ensemble focuses strongly about popularizing Japanese drumming in both Japan and throughout the world. They travel extensively to promote the culture of drums, while their masterly performances find a broad response and appreciation everywhere.

The proverbial Japanese meticulousness and team spirit, caught up with all the parties involved, produced a truly unique event for the Amman cultural scene. It looks like it may mark the beginning of more serious cultural cooperation between the two countries. ■

Sitting on top of the Early Bronze wall, and immediately next to the Middle Bronze construction is a Roman/Byzantine wall which seems to have a gate leading to a road giving access to the Pella spring at the base of the tell.

After 14 seasons of excavation, Pella is a site that has captured the hearts of the Australian archaeologists. Stephen Bourke has been there for 10 of the 14 seasons but is just one of many archaeologists who have returned year after year. Dr. Pamela Watson is now back to work on Tell Husein which faces Pella and shares its history. In previous seasons she has found splendid remains of the Byzantine use of the tell which has a commanding view of the Jordan Valley and of the trade routes through the Esdraelon valley to the Mediterranean.

Their work at Pella has also been important in making the Australian public aware of Jordanian archaeology through publications, lectures and, in 1990, a major exhibition at the Australian National Gallery in Canberra. Under the title "Digging in Time" the exhibition introduced the public to the history and archaeology of Pella over 12,000 years.

These range from a mortar and pestle dating back to the Natufian period of 10,000 BC to lamps and coins of the Islamic era. Between come Bronze Age sculpture, Early and Middle Bronze pottery, Iron Age ceramic lamps, Roman glass and ceramic vessels, bracelets and gold earrings from the Byzantine era. Each season brings new finds and more details for the history of Pella which, says Stephen Bourke, will easily keep the Australians busy for another 14 seasons. ■



Pello finds on exhibit

unearthed the remains of an extensive Middle Bronze (1000 BC) wall, one of the earliest such walls ever found in the Jordan Valley, and 25 meters of an Early Bronze (2700 BC) wall very close by, which suggests that the physical shape of the settlement on the main tell at Pella changed little in over a thousand years.

The current season has also

Focus on Jordanian literature (5)

Elias Farkouh: A study in human suffering



Elias Farkouh

vent stories, and reveal their secrets. Thus tales are born and furies appear, and with the accumulation of fine sand, features are added and details are depicted. Events are structured within imperious worlds, yet through the translucent domes, he sees them. These two crystal domes: one spalls out the details, and the other gathers them to form a tale with characters, features, action and mystery. Mysteries? Yes, and why not? On his forehead, an expression of profound thought was depicted, and on his face showed a constant smile. He looked down, he began to observe how tales born inside crystal chambers — words, inside domes full of sand.

Like the narrator of the *Mysteries of the Sandglass*, Farkouh works out his tales, but instead of the crystal domes and the fine sand, he forms a literary work from experiences such as human pain, sorrow, bitterness, and the appointed experiences, bitterness and pain remain essential ingredients. For example, in the first part of the collection, which consists of five stories, the quest of the individual for independence, fulfillment, freedom, and privacy is the common theme, despite differences in the nature of characters and in events and places. This quest is perpetually frustrated through the intervention of society, its conventions, and politicized social institutions.

The ruthless humiliation of the writer in the first story, which he suffers at the hands of "the night visitors" is the punitive response to his violation of social taboos. Through writing a story, he uncovers three significant mysteries: The erotic scene between the girl and her lover which ends with the murder of the lover in the basement; the scene between the two ladies in the closed chamber and the uncovering of a secret agent who has infiltrated a party meeting. Thus individual freedom is restricted within a set of taboos that cover almost every aspect of his daily life, and even his conscious and unconscious practices.

The following is a story from the first part, entitled *A Violation*, where we find the most private individual freedom appropriated, regardless of the psychological impact that such

an act could have:

As she left the post office, she felt in her perplexity and disappointment which showed out through the large, brown empty envelope but from a short letter and one, single book. She missed no words, not even the abstract, unpermeated, routine "thanks" which holds incongruous, contrasting emotions. Here you ever realized that "thanks" sometimes means "damn", while simultaneously bearing the character of gratitude? Yes, she did not utter even the word "thanks," but left the post office building, wrapped in her bewilderment and perplexity which struck her dumb, or, perhaps, robbed her of the desire to speak. As she covering left, fixing her eyes on nothing.

Apart from dozens of pedestrians and a countless number of cars, the street was empty. On the two thoroughly cleaned pavements, rows of flourishing trees stretched endlessly, colorful signs of stores that sell everything, and a brilliant sky that found its comfort in its bareness; a cloudless, clear sky.



She fixed her eyes on nothing, despite the pedestrians, the cars, the two pavements, the stores, and the sky — yes, the sky that we all know, and which I now qualify as a scandalous, dispiriting ceiling.

She raised her head, and there was the sky. She raised her head towards the clear, clean ceiling, and inaudibly asked, "Who's above you, oh blue as diluted paint?"

Her tears overpowered her, and she pressed the large, brown envelope pouring her bitter, childish anger into it, and left it there — inside the orange-colored container which hung on colored canvas which hung on a wall. She left it. She is a the pylon, she left it. She is a good citizen who cares to keep her city clean. She was not her city clean. She was not awarded a prize for her conduct; however, nobody saw people perform her duty towards her city; certainly, none. She is her city; certainly, none. She is the young lonely citizen walking over snowflake-like swells of the pavement, her short, black hair soaring high, despite its shortness, and her rosy, transparent dress fluttering like angelic wings, although she wore milk-white trousers. She saw herself doing so, but nobody else saw

her. She sensed something wanting; something inexplicable, besides that which had left a great space for air inside the large, brown envelope, now shrivelled in the garbage; an ambiguous deficiency, tortuous to the soul. She pulled out the short letter from the single book which was in French, and reread the message:

"My dear, all my love; all my longing to my beloved. For your sake I work here in Morocco. The country itself is on atrocious place, a worm bosom to receive you — to receive us — I know not how to write letters, particularly love letters. I love you. Enclosed are the four books you requested; as for the fifth, the Arabic translation is out of print, so I sent it in its original language as a souvenir. I perceive you do not know that language."

"Awaiting your reply, I hope you'll enjoy the books that are omens of connection and communication between us. I shall try to enjoy reading books as you do, and from this moment I'll start."

Your affectionate lover."

She looked back towards the container, its orange color faded. While tears rolled down her cheeks, she inaudibly and despondently cried: "What's above you, oh blue as diluted paint? How do you view such a loss? Who stole the books and disrupted connection and communication?"

When she first received the envelope from the official, she asked in amazement: "Who opened it?" He silently shrugged; and when she read the letter, she again inquired in surprise: "Who took the books?"

He did not answer, but shrugged, scratched his head, and lit a new cigarette. Full of disappointment, defeat, and bewilderment, she asked: "Who should I complain to?" But the official had turned away in a corner, licking the stamps and sticking them on large, brown envelope that goaded the elegance of travel and airmail. The girl looked at the elegant pile, then at her wrinkled, weary, violent one, then again at those decorated with the new, colorful stamps, and as usual, inaudibly asked, "Will they arrive with their contents?"

Wounded up in her bewilderment and disappointment, she faltered as she left the post office with her large, brown empty envelope.

velope emptied of four Arabic books which were to form continuous relations, communication, and enjoyment with her lover, but the four books were not there; or not there.

In this story, Farkouh picks out the most painful moment in an individual's lifetime, and attempts to reveal the inner suffering, not through delving into the innermost feelings and analyzing them, but through the accumulation of those details of the environment, social milieu and even natural phenomena that affect the character both physically and psychologically; an external-oriented technique aimed at inward revelation. The outcome of this technique is dramatically amazing; a true depiction of not only the external surroundings, but a real representation of the trauma suffered under such circumstantial pressures.

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In the fourth part, which consists of two short stories, the emblem of suffering is taken one step further to authoritarian oppression, where individuals suffer from degradation and humiliation at the hands of unchallenged authorities. In this part, we notice that Farkouh attempts to present a reinterpretation of mythology and to elucidate a new dimension hitherto unfamiliar to the reader.

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Pella casts its spell once more

By Pam Dougherty
Special to The Star

"IF IT'S February, it must be Pella" has long been a rallying cry for the Friends of Archaeology. Since 1979, when archaeologists from the Department of Archaeology at Sydney University and the College of Wooster, University of Ohio, came together as the Sydney-Wooster Joint Expedition to excavate at Pella in the Jordan Valley, an early spring trip to the site has been an essential part of the FOA program.

And so it was that on 14 February, Stephen Bourke of the University of Sydney, who is leading this year's team, found himself taking 30 keen Friends around the lush green site.

Pella, Tabaqat Fahl to its modern village residents, is a dream site. Located on a strategic crossroads that links the northern and southern Jordan Valley and the trade routes of China, India and

Arabia with the coastal towns of Palestine, and blessed with a perennial spring and mild climate, it shows evidence of human activity going back to a million years and of continuous habitation for six thousand years.

With such riches to pursue, each year's excavation must concentrate on one or two specific goals. This year, says Stephen, their major concentration is on expanding their knowledge of the Bronze and Iron Age (3000-500 BC) occupations at Pella.

He says they are intrigued by the remains of a large late Bronze Age (1450 BC) administrative complex/palace now under excavation, and dig house debate on just what it was and what purpose it served is ferocious and far from settled. What is known so far is that it was a 20 by 15 meter complex with an open central courtyard, a number of aido rooms and a large grille wall. The Pella team are hoping that by the end of this season

they will have the first complete plan of such a building in Jordan. The complex appears to have been in use for 100-150 years and they would like to be able to work out if there was a change in its use over that time or in the nature of the administration for which it was built.

At some time during its history, past holes were dug on the site and Stephen Bourke believes this could have been around 1300-1400 BC, at the time when the Pharaohs were complaining about Mubab of Pella and his father Labiya who were challenging Egypt's control of their administrative areas in Palestine. He believes they could have been nomads who were in transient occupation of the administrative building and had set up camp there. He admits, in good humor, that not everyone on the Pella team agrees with his interpretation of events, hence the active dig house debate.

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By Mary Denis
Special to The Star

IF ONE were to characterize Japanese culture in a few words, one could probably say that it has a tendency towards internal austerity, elegance (*miyabi*, *subi*) and tranquillity rather than external excess, impressiveness and intensity, which has thus earned the Japanese a reputation of being inwardly aesthetic, reserved and even unemotional people.

This stereotypical image, however, was shaken off — at least in the field of music — by the dynamic and flamboyant performance of the Japanese Percussion Ensemble, which has just completed its tour of the Gulf States and Jordan. Under the patronage of Their Highnesses Prince Knad and Princess Majda, the Ryu Ensemble was presented by the National Music Conservatory in cooperation with the Japanese Embassy.

Entitled 'Japanese Sounds, Vital Palpitations', it was a magnificent display of traditional types of drums, a flute, and a three-stringed lute set against a neat, decorated stage. Japanese motifs, colorful outfits, shimmering muscled, vibrant body movements, complimentary lighting — all these made it a truly unique experience.

"The Japanese hear music with their bodies and eyes," explained Jundo Renzan, founder of the Ryu Ensemble and its leading drummer. As a musician who wishes to generate his Japanese spirit into sounds, Renzan says he simply follows his heart beat. He claims that his sticks pick up

The unbeatable sound of the Japanese drums ensemble

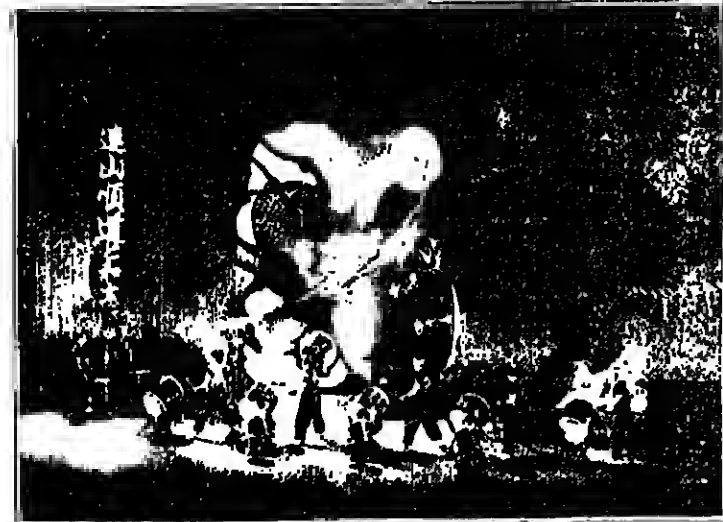
his heart's pulsation, transmit the vibrations to the drums and reproduce the beat. His body responds accordingly, interacting with the drums.

He makes it all sound very easy, while, in fact, behind the mastery technique lies many years of intense study and training.

Renzan studied techniques of multiple drumming in the Tokyo 'Sukeroku' style. As a result, he founded his own Oshu Sabane School in 1982. Two years later he founded the Yamagata Prefecture Drum Federation and became a teacher, officially recognized by the Federation of Japanese Drum Groups. Since April 1991 Renzan has given instruction to 32 drumming groups throughout Japan.

Assuming the stage name Wadaiko (drums) Ryu Renzan Jundo, he has earned the reputation as a master of solo performance on the large drum (*daiko*), and is considered to be the finest player of this instrument in Japan.

The history of drumming goes well back into the times of early Buddhism in Japan, when drums were traditionally played on ceremonial and religious occasions. Renzan has a great respect for and good knowledge of drums as a traditional instrument. He has creatively adopted the traditional values and features of drumming



The Japanese percussion ensemble: dramatic and flamboyant

to the needs of his Ensemble, thus developing his own style of playing and presentation. It synthesizes high techniques of the rhythm of beat with physical appeal, turning his shows into an exceptional spectacle.

Before striking a beat on their instruments the drummers give swooping, high-spirited shouts. Body movements intensify the emotional atmosphere of the show. The juggling of drum sticks is incorporated into the rhythm and is an important component of the performance. As Renzan explains, an emphasis on timing in one of the characteris-

tics of Japanese traditional music and he integrates it expertly with all the visual effects.

For Renzan, his performances are not just a display of his virtuosity, his main objective is to involve the audience in the spectacle. But how did he achieve this goal in front of a foreign audience? How did he overcome the language barrier, and the lack of 'feel' for Japanese music on the part of his audience?

A suitable solution was found in Nabil Sawalhin, a well-known theater and TV personality who was asked to present the show. He became a link, a medium

through whom the artists could relate to the audience, while at the same time proving to be a gifted master of ceremonies.

Living proof of the audience's involvement in the show was their participation in the finale, 'Sabane-yagi-bushi', a lively arrangement of a traditional Japanese folk song by Renzan for Noto (*shamisen*) and drums. Interestingly enough, the rhythm of the piece somehow resembled an Arabic beat, to which the audience spontaneously reacted by joining in with the musicians.

An enigmatic piece entitled 'Sounds of Ancient Yamato' depicted the 'pulsation' of the 4th century, Japan's most blossoming cultural period, and was also well received.

Wadaiko drums have more than a musical meaning to Renzan, they bind his family together. His wife, Takeshi Tamamura, also plays in the Ensemble. Renzan's two sons, accomplished drummers in their own right, are also a part of the Ryu group.

Renzan's Ryu Ensemble feels strongly about popularizing Japanese drumming in both Japan and throughout the world. They travel extensively to promote the culture of drums, while their masterly performances find a broad response and appreciation everywhere.

The proverbial Japanese meticulousness and team spirit, caught up with all the parties involved produced a truly unique event for the Amman cultural scene. It looks like it may mark the beginning of more serious cultural cooperation between the two countries.

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Pella finds on exhibit

unearthed the remains of an extensive Middle Bronze (1000 BC) wall, one of the earliest such walls ever found in the Jordan Valley, and 25 meters of an Early Bronze (2700 BC) wall very close by, which suggests that the physical shape of the settlement on the main tell at Pella changed little in over a thousand years.

Sitting on top of the Early Bronze wall, and immediately next to the Middle Bronze construction is a Roman/Byzantine wall which seems to have a gate leading to a road giving access to the Pella spring at the base of the tell.

After 14 seasons of excavation, Pella is a site that has captured the hearts of the Australian archaeologists. Stephen Bourke has been there for 10 of the 14 seasons but is just one of many archaeologists who have returned year after year. Dr. Pamela Watson is now back to work on Tell Hush which faces Pella and shares its history. In previous seasons she has found splendid remains of the Byzantine use of the tell which has a commanding view of the Jordan Valley and of the trade routes through the Esdralon valley to the Mediterranean.

Their work at Pella has also been important in making the Australian public aware of Jordanian archaeology through publications, lectures and, in 1990, a major exhibition at the Australian National Gallery in Canberra. Under the title 'Digging Time' the exhibition introduced the public to the history and facts of Pella over 12,000 years.

These range from a mortar and pestle dating back to the Neolithic period of 10,000 BC to lamps and coins of the Islamic era. Between come Bronze Age sculpture, Early and Middle Bronze pottery, Iron Age ceramic lamps, Roman glass and ceramic vessels, bracelets and gold earrings from the Byzantine era. Each season brings new finds and more details for the history of Pella which, says Stephen Bourke, will easily keep the Australians busy for another 14 seasons.

By Fahd A. Salameh

Writer Elias Farkouh's collection of short stories, *The Sandglass*, is a collection of part five of our literature series.

Born in Amman in 1948, Elias Farkouh received his education at Amman and East Jerusalem. His literary talents showed in his secondary studies, and his literary work appeared in various journals.

After gaining his General Secondary Education Certificate, he studied in London where he studied English language for one year, then he joined the Arab University of Beirut where he studied philosophy and psychology.

During his time in London, he became a member of Al-Akbar Literature Supplement and published a first story "Prometheus Inside the Rain" in 1976. In 1978, he published his first short story collection, *The Stop*, in Beirut. In 1981, he published a second collection, *Lowering Birds of Amman*.

In 1983, Farkouh also worked as a translator of the Jordanian newspaper, *Al-Jumhuriya*. He has been a member of the Jordanian Writers Association and has published five short story collections. He wrote a novel in 1989 titled *From Heights*, which was the 1990 State Prize. He has published three translated works, in addition to his contributions to literary magazines of Jordanian newspapers and journals.

His collection *Mysteries of the Sandglass* was published by The Jordanian Foundation for Studies and Research, Beirut, in 1991. The collection is divided into four parts, containing 13 short stories, which are viewed thematically as a novel, since all the stories revolve around one major theme — the human being in an oppressive social structure.

The characters in this collection could be viewed as archetypes for suffering, regardless of class or culture. They are the soldier, the lover, the philosopher, the student, the philosopher, the old man, the young man. Even when his characters are given a name and a specific circumstance, the experience which they undergo remains more general in nature, more universal, rather than isolated incidents.

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Elias Farkouh: A study in human suffering



Elias Farkouh

rent stories, and reveal their secrets. Thus tales are born and faces appear, and with the accumulation of five sand features are added and details are depicted. Events are structured within impermanent worlds; set through the translucent domes, he sees them. These two crystal domes: one spills out the details, and the other gathers them to form a tale with characters, features, action and mysteries. Mysteries! Yes, and why not? On his forehead, an expression of profound thought was depicted, and on his face a serene smile. Upside down, he turned the sandglass again, and began to observe how tales form inside crystal chambers, worry, inside domes full of sand.

Like the narrator of *The Mysteries of the Sandglass*, Farkouh works out his tale, but instead of the crystal domes and the line sand, he forms a literary work from experience, such as human pain, sorrow, loneliness, and disappointment. Even in the most animated experiences, loneliness and pain remain essential ingredients. For example, in the first part of the collection, which consists of five stories, the quest of the individual for independence, fulfillment, freedom, and privacy is the common theme, despite differences in the nature of characters and in events and places. This quest is perpetually frustrated through the intervention of society, its conventions, and politicized social institutions.

The ruthless humiliation of the writer in the first story, which he suffers at the hands of "the night visitors" is the punitive response to his violation of social taboos. Through writing a story, he uncovers three significant mysteries: The erotic scene between the girl and her lover which ends with the murder of the lover in the basement; the scene between the two ladies in the closed chamber and the uncovering of a secret agent who has infiltrated a party meeting. Thus individual freedom is restricted within a set of taboos that cover almost every aspect of his daily life, and even his conscious and unconscious practices.

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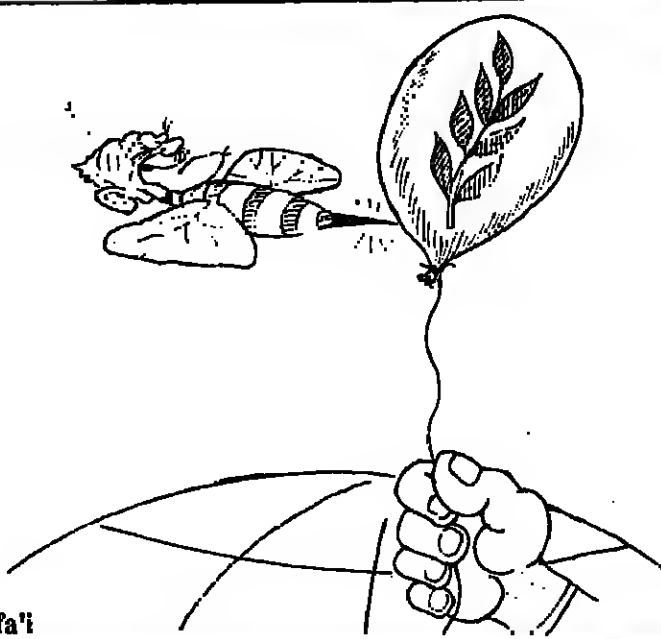
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Our Say....

Stop punishing Jordan

THE JORDAN Shipping Association (JSA) has warned that Allied navies, particularly US ships, have intensified their operations in the Red Sea recently and prevented four commercial vessels heading to Aqaba from completing their journeys. The association said that the four ships were all carrying foodstuffs bound for Jordan and Iraq and had complied with all measures required by the Allied navy before sailing into the Tiran Straits. Still, these ships were randomly picked up by Allied captains, intercepted and returned without logical justification.

It is common knowledge by now that such acts hurt Jordan— itself a victim of the Gulf crisis— at a time when the country is struggling to stand on its own feet and battle against severe economic hardship. JSA's statement was actually a plea to world countries, the US and members of the UN Security Council in particular, to appreciate Jordan's unique position. Aqaba is Jordan's only gateway to the sea and the Allied navies' behavior only adds to the country's economic insecurity and hurts relations with its trading partners on personal and national levels.

Above all, these actions create a sense of outrage among Jordanians who will suffer from any unnecessary delay in food shipments.

Jordan has been honoring UN resolutions regarding Iraq from the very beginning. But Jordanians feel duty bound to extend humanitarian aid to their Iraqi brethren. Such aid includes sending food and medicine to help Iraqi children suffering from malnutrition as a result of the UN embargo. Jordanians cannot be made scapegoats because of their sympathy towards the Iraqi people who in the last two years have suffered from an economic embargo, war and political and economic unrest.

On the other hand, Jordan's strict adherence to the UN resolutions has been more than exemplary. Only the other day US Secretary of State James Baker assured a Congressional sub-committee that Jordan has not violated UN sanctions. Independent UN reports back his statement.

So why the heroics in the Red Sea? And why now? Jordanians have asked themselves these questions time and time again. Jordan is a sovereign country that has every right to question any attempt to discredit and hurt her. We are putting this question forward today.

Preventing food shipments from reaching Jordan contravenes the embargo mandate. Jordanians should not be made to suffer if the United States and her allies are trying to tighten their grip on the livelihood of the Iraqis. Both acts are immoral and inhumane in our view. Allied navies know for certain that no violations of the UN embargo have taken place by Jordanian shipping agents or importers.

We are calling on the UN Security Council to monitor the behavior of its navies in the Red Sea and to take into consideration Jordan's unique position. Aqaba, after all, is a Jordanian and not an Iraqi port. Jordan understands its responsibilities and has honored them from the outset. Acts of provocation in the high seas will only add to our indignation and frustration. Jordan should not be punished, but helped and assured. Allied actions in the Red Sea are not helping to restore our trust and confidence. Allied envoys have a responsibility here and they are requested to fulfil it. ■

You can't ignore the Palestinians!

By Daoud Kullab

IF THE multilateral peace conference in Moscow showed anything, it was that you can't deal with the larger Arab-Israeli conflict without solving the main political problem in the area — primarily Israel's conflict with the Palestinians. Similarly, the Moscow conference showed that you can't deal with the Palestinian problem by ignoring two-thirds of the Palestinian people.

One of the main principles behind the idea of multilateral peace talks was to provide the long-term cement that would help keep any peace settlement worked out on the bilateral level from falling apart. While Israel came willing to talk to its immediate and not-so-immediate neighbors about long-term issues like the environment, sharing water resources and economic cooperation, it refused wholeheartedly to come to terms with the totality of the Palestinian problem.

Ever since its inception, the State of Israel has continuously tried to define the Palestinian problem as an issue of a minority population that has to have its civil rights assured, rather than as a people with national rights.

Even in recent months, Israel has acted on this policy. Israel is the only country in history to make the absurd request to tamper with the names of its enemy's delegation to peace talks.

In letters of assurances to the Palestinians and to Israel, the Americans made seemingly contradictory statements. They assured the Palestinians that no side has a right to veto the other side's delegation. But the US also assured the Israelis that

no one would be forced to speak to anyone they didn't want to.

When Palestinians in Madrid decided, for the sake of advancing peace, voluntarily to submit a list of Palestinians to which Israel couldn't say no, the Israelis took it as a permanent Palestinian concession regarding their representation. And in Moscow, Israel insisted that Palestinian representation be the same as in Madrid.

This kind of tampering with one's enemy's delegation to peace will not produce the type of long-term peace settlement that everyone is on record as being committed to. We must be able to overcome this issue, by facing reality and admitting what the conflict is all about.

The Israelis have yet to accept what the entire world has accepted for years: That for permanent peace to come to the Middle East, the totality of the Palestinian problem must be solved. This means recognizing that the conflict is a national conflict between two peoples who have different national aspirations.

Difficult issues like Jerusalem and the right of return must be dealt with. Denying them will not remove these problems or cause the other side to concede on them. Only by dealing with them head on in difficult and serious negotiations can a solution be found.

In fact, dealing with the totality of the Palestinian issue and with a genuine and representative Palestinian delegation should be Israel's request, if it is indeed searching for a lasting peace, because no settlement between Israel and the Palestinians will stick if it isn't conducted with a Palestinian delegation that can deliver what it signs.

Shmir must know that neither Dr. Abdel Shafi or Faisal Hussein nor Hassan Ashrawi can deliver the Palestinian people. Only the PLO can do that. Abdel Shafi's legitimization is derived from the fact that the PLO in Tunis chose him and has directed his negotiating strategy since. If Israelis don't realize that, there is a major communication problem.

But if, for emotional and internal political reasons, Israelis are unable to deal directly with the PLO now, that can be swilled; so long as it is recognized that sooner or later if they aspire to a steady and stable peace agreement, they need the signature of the Tunis PLO and not just the West Bank and Gaza PLO people.

Progress in the talks between Israel and the Palestinians also needs to be kept alive by a change in atmosphere in the occupied territories. How can there be peace without a cease-fire?

For Palestinians, a cease-fire will require that Israel first and foremost stop blasting the occupied territories. Bulldozers tearing up Palestinian land to make room for Jewish settlements is tantamount to constant and severe shelling. The policy of shooting at Palestinian protesters while political activity is illegal must also stop. In return, I believe Palestinians will undoubtedly stop most forms of violent protest, which are caused primarily by the Israeli oppressive measures.

Only when the parties to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict are willing to recognize each other's national aspirations and their basic right to choose their own representation, followed by serious confidence-building measures on the ground, can progress in the peace talks be hoped for. Short of that, all the meetings, talks and negotiations will amount to nothing more than giving a dying cancer patient some pain killers. ■

The writer is a Palestinian journalist living in Jerusalem.

US navy intensifies interceptions

AMMAN (Star) — The Jordan Shipping Association has said that interception of Aqaba-bound vessels by Allied navies has intensified in the last ten days. In a statement distributed Saturday, the association said Allied navies have prevented four commercial vessels from passing through the Tiran Straits to Aqaba on the excuse that it was not easy to inspect the vessels' cargo. The association said all ships were carrying foodstuffs for the Jordanian and Iraqi markets. It added that Iraqi-bound foodstuffs have been exempted from the UN embargo resolution number 687. It accused Allied navies of preventing ships haphazardly and with no logical justifications.

The statement said US navy ships intercepted the Sata Maru on 17 February and prevented it from sailing through. The ship was carrying 755 tons of frozen meat for the Jordanian market. Four other ships carrying similar cargo were allowed in that same week. The US navy also intercepted Alan on 22 February. The ship, carrying 13,600 tons of sugar is still moored at the Tiran Straits. The US navy also intercepted Rize-K and An Angel Champion on 24 and 26 February respectively. Both ships were carrying sugar cargo. Rize-K has since headed to Suez while An Angel Champion is still waiting near the straits.

The statement said these interceptions, taking place just before Ramadan, are damaging the Jordanian economy and causing personal losses to Jordanian importers, besides the fact that they abuse the mandate of UN Security Council. ■

Playing by numbers in the Gulf

The stalemate in the Gulf has produced a plethora of statistics about the gains and losses of the adversaries in the war. The most confusing among these, and perhaps the most politically motivated, has been the fluctuating count of the Iraqi dead in the conflict.

By Sajid Rizvi
Academic File / London

LONDON — A few years ago I was asked to the plush interior of a now deserted ministry building in Baghdad to review a planning aide on the economic damage of Iraq. The encounter had a suspicious beginning when the principal interviewee told me, "You can ask me all the questions you want but don't expect any statistics."

Today, a year after war made all real or imagined economic figures insignificant, Iraqi statistics are thick with a crossfire of lies from the Iraqis themselves, from Arab neighbors, from the United Nations and from the United States. Most of the numbers relate to the war, and its cost in human lives and injuries, and destruction and the all-embracing agony of missing or unknown. As the Iraqi leaders, conflicting numbers seem to be determining the rules of the bitter game being played out between Baghdad and Washington on the one hand and Baghdad and the rest of the world on the other.

Chief among the disputed statistics is the number of the Iraqi dead. At the beginning of the war Allied accounts of the Iraqi military fatalities conveniently put the figure around 200,000 and then around 100,000. But later estimates spoke of only about 8,000 deaths — 125th of the original count. The revised Pentagon figures in early February further added to the confusion by almost conclusively stating that an Iraqi dead figure of no more than 15,000.

The new information, Pentagon sources say, was based on evidence gathered inside Iraq — hospital reports, burials and other information that, among other things, sifted the dead from the desert. Western newspaper reports in the meantime radically revised downwards the figures of Iraqi troop deployment against the Allied ground forces, from an estimated half a million to no more than 200,000. The remainder, about 300,000,



are now believed to have deserted the Iraqi ranks under the allied onslaught.

But Dilip Hiro, author of the book *Desert Storm: The Second Gulf War* (Paladin/Harper Collins), believes that there is more in the juggling of statistics, especially US estimates of the Iraqi war dead, than meets the eye. Much of the ongoing US effort to downgrade the Iraqi war casualties, he believes, has to do with the fact that the war remains very much on the American domestic political agenda. "Iraqi and Saddam Hussein particularly, is unfinished business and a potential embarrassment in (President George) Bush in his fight for re-election," he said in an interview. Hiro believes that the Bush administration may be preparing ground for a renewed assault on Iraq.

Other analysts do not dispute the political dimensions of the US numbers game but point out that the Pentagon fumbling with figures has to do perhaps as much with lack of experience of an incumbent with political exigencies of an incumbent administration. Don Kerr, defense analyst with the London consultancy Control Risk Group who was for a long time associated with the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), said he believed that Pentagon estimates stemmed from computer data processed within the parameters of rules established after World War II. "The United States has not really fought a war on the scale of the Gulf War since World War II," he said in an interview. "Korea and Vietnam were not at all like the Gulf war and the Pentagon has only just begun to face the statistical challenges posed by the conflict with Iraq."

Dilip Hiro believes that an institution that can bounce back and forth between estimates of 200,000 deaths in about 8,000 can hardly be considered reliable. He is convinced the first figures were as politically motivated as the current ones. In the early stage of the war, the United States obviously wanted to provoke the Iraqi people into action against Saddam Hussein. Today, he said, the United States' chief objectives seem to be to reassure the American electorate as well as the US allies in the Middle East that President Bush is on top of the Gulf situation and that upping Saddam Hussein remains high on his agenda.

The fluctuation in the Gulf War dead figures have been mind-boggling, leading to suspicion amongst analysts that they were but a mere cog in the allies' propaganda machine. At the outset, Hiro recalled, the Sunday Times quoted allied intelligence sources as speculating in Washington that as many as 200,000 Iraqis may have died. A few weeks later General Norman Schwarzkopf, allied forces commander, offered an estimate of 150,000. On 22 May 1991 the US Defense Intelligence Agency is-

sued its estimate of 100,000 with an "error factor" of 50 per cent, which meant that 50,000 to 150,000 Iraqis might have been killed.

The purpose of offering those high casualty figures, maintains Hiro in the book and again in the interview, "was to help create discontent against Saddam Hussein and his regime, and foment a popular uprising against them." In fact, he maintains, the real figure may be 82,500 — nearer a previous Pentagon estimate of 72,500 to 118,000 dead — made up of all the casualties in the bombing, ground fighting, attacks on retreating Iraqis and an estimated 8,000 Iraqi troops buried alive in their trenches by earthmovers and ploughs deployed in the ground assault by the US mechanized infantry division.

Whether the actual death toll ever becomes known or not, the United States still has to cope with the consequences of its half-measures for the Iraqis who survived the ordeal. Iraqis, never enamored of the United States because of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, are being fed by the Baghdad regime a daily diet of anti-Americanism reminiscent of the early days of the Iran hostage crisis.

Most analysts doubt that the US administration has ever seriously considered the option of eliminating Saddam Hussein because of fears the outcome will immensely strengthen Iran. Even if Saddam goes, there is no certainty that the Baath Party regime will disappear. On the whole, therefore, the chief objectives of Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm remain out of reach.

As a recent IISS analysis of the conflict observed, the war changed little and the Middle East remains fossilized in the old order, waiting for the political processes initiated by the Gulf crisis to be advanced and made clearer.

As things stand there is as much room for order as there is for disorder. Which prospect will become ascendant is dependent on three critical issues — the future status and role of Iraq, the response of the Arab regimes to their political and economic problems and the result of the Arab-Israeli process, according to the IISS study. As there has been little progress on the first two of these issues, said the study by Roland Dannreuther, hinges now rest on an Israeli-Palestinian settlement.

The price of failure will be considerable, warns the IISS study. "It is sufficient just to contemplate that any future war in the Middle East will probably not be fought with conventional weapons alone."

A further imponderable on the complex landscape has been added by what one analyst sees as "descent of Central Asia into the Gulf." The rise of independent republics in Central Asia has propelled two major regional powers, Turkey and Iran, onto the central stage. While the former allies in the Gulf conflict have been content to let Turkey perform its usual role as the middleman, most Western powers are wary of Iran's intentions. Few amongst them, however, seem averse to an accommodation with Iran. As the future unfolds, Western powers may find they have to take the numbers game a few steps forward and rearrange their priorities with unforeseeable consequences all around. ■ Academic File.

Desert Shield to Desert Storm: The Second Gulf War. By Dilip Hiro. 591 pp. Paladin/Harper Collins.

The Gulf Conflict: A Political and Strategic Analysis. By Roland Dannreuther. Adelphi Paper No. 264. The International Institute for Strategic Studies, London.

Sajid Rizvi is the managing editor of Academic File.

Middle East Underlined

It's Yitzhak vs. Yitzhak in Israel's June elections

AS THINGS now appear, it will be Yitzhak vs. Yitzhak — Shamir and Rabin — in the coming Israeli general election bout, an as yet untold tale match, with odds that are far from clear.

It's completely different from 1984 and 1988's familiar Shamir vs. Peres fights. Political analysts are quick to predict that with this year's contenders there is also a far greater chance for a friendly post-fight handshake, providing it ends not with an outright KO but a technical knockout for one of the Yitzhaks.

In that event, those two are much more likely to cooperate satisfactorily in a national unity government than did Shamir and Peres. While Peres strove relentlessly to undermine the last national unity government in which he served, Rabin and Shamir cooperated idyllically. They got along far better with each other than with their own party headlines.

In fact, Rabin opposed the Peres move which brought down the national unity coalition and labelled it "a sinking maneuver." Many in Labor agree that Peres has now finally paid for that failed maneuver in March 1990.

Though long-term prospects of getting along with Rabin appear better from the Likud's perspective, news of his victory was not greeted with glee in the Likud. The party's favorite adversary was Peres, whom it had gotten used to knocking zestfully. As long as Rabin opposed Peres, he was the Likud's darling. Laborite, which helped make him popular with the general public. Now, the Likud will have to smash the new Labor leader it helped build up.

But if the Likud's reaction was equivocal, there was joy in the new left-wing bloc. The leftist strategists see the Rabin win as worth a few additional Knesset mandates for them.

The idea is that Rabin will frighten from Labor's corner diehard "peaceniks" who would have stayed with the Peres camp but to whom Rabin is anathema. These voters, the leftist reckoning is, would flee straight into the new left's open arms.

The trouble, left-wingers fear, lies in longer-term ramifications. Rabin could lose the left of his party, but might well foil to win the voters floating between the Likud and Labor.

There are not all that many floaters and, by election day, they will tend to head back to the Likud, it is argued. Hence, the left is far from sure that Rabin improves Labor's chances to form a government, though he is an asset for the left's electoral prospects.

In the internal Labor configuration, the outstanding fact is that Rabin had a hard time beating Peres even after Peres's four electoral defeats and other unsavory chapters. Rabin managed to climb with the greatest difficulty over the 40 per cent hurdle in an unprecedented cliffhanger that lasted till the very last votes were in that yesterday morning. This happened despite the fact that Rabin was the odds-on favorite and that he was no longer an anti-establishment underdog.

In fact, the party establishment had hitched itself long ago to his bandwagon and had abandoned Peres. One need only glance at the long list of Knesset members who endorsed Rabin and at the negligible number who maintained loyalty to Peres. The party machine was not defeated this time; it merely changed sides. ■

Jerusalem Post

Le Jourdain

Section française du Star

L'orage du siècle

Trois jours de neige et de blizzard ont provoqué d'énormes dégâts en Jordanie et dans toute la région. Dans le seul royaume, 260 blessés... C'est le cinquième orage qui s'abat sur la Jordanie depuis le mois de janvier. De mémoire de Jordanien, l'hiver 1991-92 est le plus rude jamais connu.



Portefeuille

Hausse spectaculaire des carburants

Le prix du "super" à la pompe augmente de 11%

VOTRE PORTEFEUILLE en souffre déjà: la Jordanie a décidé dimanche dernier, une hausse du "super", du mazout et des combustibles en tout genre. Une telle mesure, entre dans le cadre du programme de redressement économique, mis au point par le gouvernement jordanien et le Fonds Monétaire International (FMI). Ce plan, fixé pour la période 1992-98 doit assurer, des sources de financement au pays. But de l'opération: renforcer la balance des paiements et reconstruire les réserves en devises du royaume.

Cette mesure doit renforcer le Trésor jordanien d'un montant d'environ 40 millions de dollars, au moment où le pays s'apprête à faire face au remboursement du service de sa dette extérieure, estimé à 1,5 milliards de dollars.

Le montant total de la dette jordanienne est de 7,2 milliards de dollars. Le Club de Paris devait se réunir vendredi 28 février, pour étudier son éventuel rééchelonnement.

Pour le Jordanien moyen, ces mesures ont des répercussions précises sur les différents prix de vente des carburants. Le litre de "super" coûte 300 fils, ce qui représente une hausse d'à peu près 11%. Le mazout passe à 105 fils le litre, et augmente donc de 40%. Quant au fuel utilisé dans l'industrie, il s'achète 65 JD la tonne, soit une hausse de 35%.

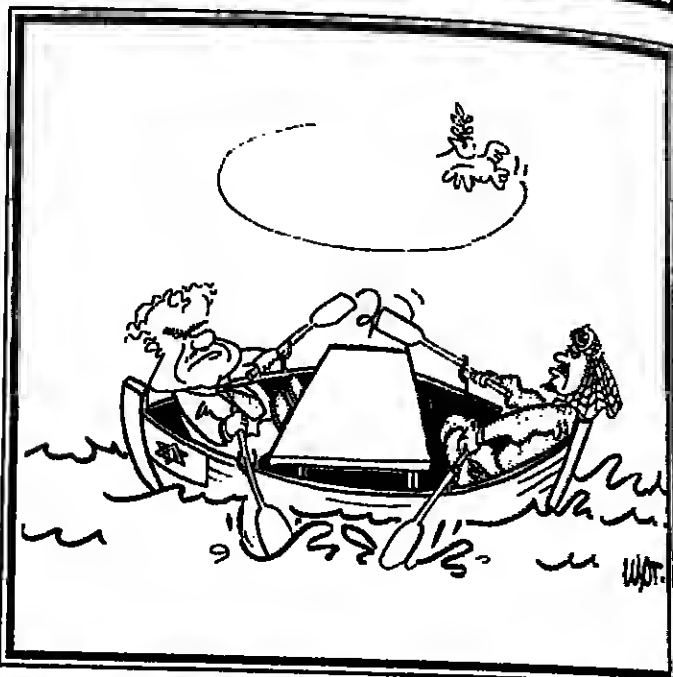
En revanche, le fuel qu'utilisent certaines entreprises pour s'alimenter en électricité ne bouge pas. Il reste à 41 dinars la tonne.

Cette décision, annoncée par le "Ministry of Supply" et prise en

accord avec le Conseil des ministres s'accompagne d'une mesure en faveur des familles des classes les moins favorisées. Les ménages, dont le revenu ne dépasse pas 300 JD par mois vont toucher 100 JD du gouvernement au cours de cette année. Une véritable prime de chauffage pour les plus défavorisés.

Le gouvernement s'est empressé d'expliquer les raisons d'une telle hausse. Le Premier ministre, Zaid ben Shaker a invité les jordanien à comprendre et à coopérer. De son côté, le Parlement a déjà prévu une session pour aborder le sujet. Précision rassurante: cette mesure devrait être la dernière pour l'année 92. C'est du moins la promesse des autorités jordanien.

(Avec AFP)



Téléx... Orient

POLIO - 32 cas de polio recensés en Jordanie depuis décembre dernier. Deux enfants ont déjà trouvé la mort des suites de cette maladie. Pour faire face à ce fléau, le ministre jordanien de la Santé a lancé lundi dernier une campagne nationale pour la vaccination des enfants en bas âge. Aref Al Bataineh a exhorté les hôpitaux jordanien, et de nombreuses organisations à participer à cette campagne. Malgré les intempéries, 300.000 enfants de moins de cinq ans ont déjà été vaccinés.

PAIX - Les pourparlers bilatéraux de Washington-quantième round, semblent hier, s'achever vers une impasse. Les Israéliens refusent toujours le principe d'un retrait des Territoires occupés depuis la guerre de 1967. Les Arabes maintiennent leur position et demandent l'application des résolutions 242 et 338 des Nations Unies. Côté américain, seul le chef du département d'Etat, James Baker, est monté au créneau devant un comité du Congrès américain, liant l'octroi de garanties de prêt à Israël à l'arrêt de la colonisation des Territoires occupés.

IRAK - Le conseil de sécurité des Nations Unies appelle l'Irak à entamer la destruction de ses missiles balistiques. Hier, l'Irak a demandé un sursis. L'ONU a rappelé sa mission d'inspection en Irak.

Téléx... France

NICE - "Cette courte victoire servira de leçon à tout le monde" a affirmé la candidate UDF-droite libérale, Marie-Jeanne Murcia, qui a coiffé sur le plateau Jacques Peyrat (FN) au deuxième tour de la cantonale de Nice. Au premier tour, le représentant du Front National, parti d'extrême-droite avait largement distancé tous les autres candidats en recueillant 37,96% des voix.

SCHIEER - L'ex-numéro deux de la diplomatie française, François Schieer, estime ne pas avoir "failli à sa tâche" dans l'affaire Habache, qui lui a coûté son poste. L'ancien secrétaire général du ministère des Affaires étrangères l'a fait savoir dans un télégramme d'adieu adressé à ses collègues de travail. Dans le "Journal du Dimanche", François Schieer précise qu'il ne critique personne dans ce message et en aucun cas le ministre Roland Dumas.

J.O. - Albertville, c'est fini! Le président du Comité international olympique (CIO), Juan Antonio Samaranch, a clôturé les Jeux Olympiques d'hiver. Il a transmis le drapeau au maire norvégien de Lillehammer, qui devra organiser les prochains Jeux, en 1994. Environ 33.000 personnes assistaient à cette cérémonie. Au palmarès des médailles, l'Allemagne arrive en tête, devant la Communauté des Etats indépendants (CEI) et la Norvège. La France se contente de la septième position.

A VOIR...

CINEMA - Cycle "visages, ambiance et nostalgie" au CCF. L'imposante présence de Raimu, le magnétisme de Louis Jouvet, l'irrésistible sourire de Gérard Philipe viennent hanter nos souvenirs. Mardi 3 mars, à 20h00, GRIBOUILLE (1937), de Marc Allégret, avec Raimu et Michèle Morgan. La France un brave homme prend en pitié une jeune femme accusée d'un crime. Il la fait acquitter.

EXPOSITION - Au CCF, du 4 au 14 mars, "Aquarelles de France Slovaque". Ce peintre Slovaque est un des grands et rares aquarellistes connus en Europe et surtout en France. Les grandes aquarelles qui seront exposées au CCF ont pour thème "les bouquets de la mer".

RECTIFICATIFS - Les concerts flûte et guitare, prévus le 24 février au Centre culturel royal et le 25 février à l'hôtel Holiday Inn d'Aqaba, sont reportés aux 2 et 3 mars. La conférence sur la "Nouvelle situation" aura lieu en avril. L'exposition Villégatures est annulée. L'expo Peintures d'enfants ne fermera ses portes que le 2 mars.

Parlement

L'alcool à l'ordre du jour

Deux semaines après le "vote des 34", le sujet hante toujours la coupole. Reportage



Ahmad Al-Kafawi

PURQUOI FAUT-IL que je me penche sur ce sujet? Est-il si important pour que vous lui consacriez un article? Tel est le premier commentaire d'un des députés Khalfat (Tafileh), l'opposition de l'alcool en Jordanie. Pour beaucoup, une question banale. Pourtant, dans les débats du Parlement, le sujet est plus que jamais à l'ordre du jour.

Chaque nouveau commentaire de la presse jordanienne alimente les conversations, émaille les débats partagés. "La Jordanie est un pays musulman; l'alcool est interdit par l'Islam; Nous ne pouvons pas nous permettre de franchir ce pas", nous confie l'une des députées Khalfat (Tafileh). "Cela ne se fera jamais. Nous ne pouvons pas isoler la Jordanie du reste du monde et surtout de l'Occident", déclare son

Ce projet avait déjà été évoqué lors de la session parlementaire précédente. Récemment, il a été examiné par la Commission Juridique du Conseil des Députés, puis soumis à l'approbation de

cultés. Tous ceux qui respectent l'être humain devraient nous soutenir dans cet effort." Aref Al-Bitush, député de Kérak appartenant au bloc parlementaire des Islamistes Indépendants et Ministre d'Etat chargé des Affaires Parlementaires, approuve également ce projet. "L'alcool est responsable de nombreux drames sociaux et de comportements irresponsables. Suivez-vous qu'en Jordanie, un crime commis sous l'effet de l'alcool permet à son auteur de bénéficier de circonstances atténuantes? Ce n'est plus acceptable!"

L'aspect économique? Ahmad Al-Kafawi reconnaît qu'il faut être particulièrement attentif. "Dans tout projet, il existe

des points positifs et des points négatifs. La solution réside sans aucun doute dans la reconversion des industries jordanien qui fabriquent actuellement de l'alcool; jus de fruits et produits laitiers par exemple peuvent remplacer les boissons alcoolisées et éviter ainsi la fermeture de ces industries et la suppression d'emplois."

"De toutes façons, la fabrication de l'alcool est une activité mineure dont la part dans l'économie jordanienne est plus que secondaire", déclare Aref Al-Bitush.

Chacun s'accorde à dire que cette "affaire" ne devrait pas éfrayer les Chrétiens, qu'ils soient jordanien ou non. "De tout temps, les Chrétiens ont bénéficié d'un statut spécial, garanti par l'Islam. Ceux qui voudront consommer de l'alcool pourront le faire chez eux. Ce qui se passe à l'intérieur des maisons ne nous regarde pas."

Quant aux étrangers, désireux de se rendre en Jordanie, touristes ou hommes d'affaires, "certains apprécieront cette mesure, car elle est un gage de sécurité et de confiance. D'autres l'exagéreront et l'utiliseront contre l'intérêt de la Jordanie."

C'est maintenant au Gouvernement d'abandonner son jeu. Avant de renvoyer le dossier au Parlement. Le temps pour les plus anxieux, de boire un petit verre. Sera-t-il le dernier? ■

Michèle Rieux

L'alcool est une maladie dont il faut débarrasser la société jordanienne

législateur. "L'interdiction de la fabrication et de la commercialisation de l'alcool est une affaire sérieuse et nous ne la considérons en aucun cas comme une simple mesure de police. Elle doit être par rapport aux nombreux défis intérieurs et extérieurs auxquels la Jordanie est confrontée", confie Fouad Khalfat. Mais nous devons l'insister-t-il.

l'ensemble du Conseil. Pour Ahmad Al-Kafawi, député Frère Musulman de la circonscription de Kérak, "l'alcool est une maladie dont il faut débarrasser la société jordanienne". "En Occident, ajoute-t-il, de nombreuses associations luttent contre l'alcoolisme, tel est également notre but. L'alcool, même en petite quantité, nuit à l'homme et à ses fa-

Secteur alcoolisé La grogne des patrons

Les usines jordaniennes productrices d'alcool se sentent menacées par la "proposition des 34". "ILS VEULENT faire de la région une loi, c'est incroyable, aujourd'hui, ils parlent de l'alcool, demain, ils vont nous dire comment nous hubiler, comment marcher, comment conduire" affirme le directeur financier d'une importante firme productrice d'alcool. Son chiffre porte-malheur est 34, 34 comme le nombre de députés qui ont récemment voté

core, telle une balle de ping-pong, rebondir favorablement dans le camp du Gouvernement, avant de revenir dans celui du Parlement. La procédure sera longue. Mais déjà, les patrons préparent leur défense, arguments économiques à l'appui.

Le secteur de la production de boissons alcoolisées, en Jordanie, c'est une dizaine de firmes, détenues par les chrétiens du royaume. Les musulmans se tiennent à l'écart de ce type d'activité. Loi jordanienne oblige. Les investissements dans ce domaine: environ 38 millions de dollars. 750 salariés travaillent dans le secteur. "Nous sommes sûrs que cette proposition va avoir des effets néfastes sur l'industrie jordanienne qui s'est développée ces dernières années" lance un patron. Un confère, sur la même longueur d'onde: "Cette année, nous espérons avoir 250 employés, nous voulons augmenter nos exportations (moins de deux millions de JD pour la précédente), nous ne pourrions pas progresser si nous rencontrons des problèmes". Il ajoute: "Nous tremblons, nous avons peur pour la plupart de nos projets, nous hésitions à importer des machines et des produits de base".

"Nous tremblons, nous avons peur pour la plupart de nos projets, nous hésitions à importer des machines et des produits de base".

Une "proposition" pour interdire la production, la vente et la distribution d'alcool en Jordanie. Au total, une dizaine de patrons d'usines de boissons alcoolisées se tiennent sur leurs gardes. "Ce n'est pas nouveau, confie l'un d'eux, l'idée a déjà été évoquée l'année dernière". Cette fois, elle a été approuvée par une majorité de parlementaires (34 sur 54).

La proposition de loi doit en-



750 employés travaillent dans ce secteur

de beaucoup de firmes dépend de nos compagnies productrices d'alcool. C'est valable pour les transports, l'emballage, les assurances..." Les patrons des dix usines ne comprennent pas, cette vague anti-alcool, à priori non justifiée.

La boisson est bien loin de représenter un fléau pour le royaume. La consommation annuelle du jordanien est d'un litre de bière, un sixième de litre d'Arak. Il suffit de multiplier par 100 pour obtenir le ratio européen. "La preuve que la politique des gouvernements en la matière a jusqu'à maintenant été couronnée de succès" affirme un patron de compagnie. Avant de porter le débat sur le terrain idéologique: "La Jordanie est présentée comme un merveilleux pays pour la libre entreprise, pour ses attractions touristiques, pour son attachement à la notion de liberté. Le vote d'une telle loi irait à l'encontre de la

démocratie". Les yeux sont maintenant rivés sur le gouvernement. Un cruel dilemme se profile à l'horizon politique de l'équipe Ben Shaker.

Deux semaines après la présentation de son plan pour l'emploi, le Premier ministre trouve entre ses mains un dossier qui rime avec chômage. Sans compter les recettes que représentent pour le Trésor les différentes taxes afférentes aux produits alcoolisés. Celles qui touchent la production locale sont de l'ordre de 14 millions de dollars par an. Les taxes sur l'importation d'alcool représentent 11 millions de dollars.

Selon des sources officielles bien informées, l'adoption de la "proposition des 34" serait exclue, en raison des répercussions négatives qu'elle aurait sur l'économie du pays. De quoi rassurer, pour le moment, dix patrons d'usines de boissons alcoolisées. ■

Francis Mazoyer

L'EDITO

de Suleiman Sweiss

Prix et sacrifices

LA NOUVELLE augmentation des prix déferle sur la Jordanie. La première vague s'est produite la semaine dernière, jetant un froid sur le royaume. Faisons-nous. Pour le moment, seuls les prix du "super", du mazout et du "fuel", nécessaires pour certaines industries, sont concernés. Mais quelles hausses! Elles s'évaluent de 11 à 40%.

Parallèlement, le gouvernement a décidé de soutenir les foyers plus ou moins défavorisés, pour leurs dépenses de chauffage. Cent J.D. seront accordés pour l'année 1992, à ceux qui gagnent moins de 300 dinars par mois.

Apparemment, le gouvernement ne pouvait pas attendre jusqu'à la fin du Ramadan. Il fallait coûte que coûte annoncer la décision avant les négociations du Club de Paris (28 février), qui devaient aboutir sur un rééchelonnement des dettes extérieures. Le mystère s'éclaircit. Un économiste a révélé le 15 février dernier que le gouvernement avait déjà pris des engagements devant le FMI en vue d'augmenter le prix des carburants.

Reconnaissons-le: à l'exception des articles subventionnés par l'Etat, l'année dernière, les prix ont augmenté à plusieurs reprises. Les citoyens ne consomment pas seulement du riz, du pain ou du sucre. Difficile de joindre les deux bouts pour bon nombre de familles.

Dans un pays comme la Jordanie, les prix ne dépendent pas seulement de l'offre et de la demande. Cette question touche aussi à la conjoncture politique.

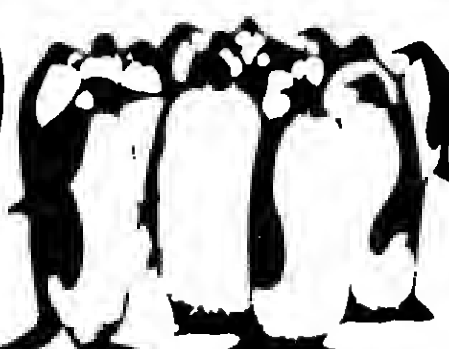
Notre pays traverse actuellement une période très difficile. Pressions politiques et économiques se conjuguent pour l'étouffer ou pour le forcer à changer d'orientations. Ces pressions proviennent des pays étrangers, comme des pays arabes, dits "frères". Nos principes doivent nous servir de rempart contre ces perpétuelles attaques.

Retour à la vie quotidienne. Le gouvernement peut encore jouer la carte de la redistribution et prendre des mesures en ce sens. Le fardeau doit être équitablement réparti sur les épaules de tous les citoyens.

Jusqu'à maintenant, les défavorisés sont les grands perdants de ce jeu économique. Ce sont ceux qui consentent le plus grand nombre de sacrifices. Lorsque le vase déborde, les protestations populaires éclatent, comme en 1989.

Pourquoi répéter les mêmes erreurs? Plus que jamais, les gros salaires doivent faire des concessions. C'est cela le véritable "ajustement structurel" qui constitue le remède pour notre pays. ■

AROUND TOWN



Congratulations!!
Graduations, appointments, engagements, weddings, newborns, promotions, special awards, excellent achievements.....
Drop us a line and send a photo...we will run it free of charge in The Star's People and Events page.

Many Ammanites were thrilled to see His Majesty King Hussein personally supervising operations to open snow blocked streets on Wednesday. The King, driving his Mercedes four-wheel drive, was accompanied by TRH Princess Ali, Hamza and Princess Haya. The King was also joined by Prime Minister Sharif Zaid ben Slaaker. King Hussein visited the Ministry of Public Works where he met with ministers Abdel Karim Kabrini (labor), Sand Inil Sruur (public works), Jawdat Shoub (interior) and Mohammad Suqaf (supply) who briefed His Majesty.

Her Majesty Queen Noor represented Jordan in a special UN meeting on the economic development of rural women, which was held in Geneva last week. Accompanying the Queen was Mrs Laila Sharaf. The meeting, which was attended by the representatives of 64 countries, was opened by UN Secretary-General Dr Butros Ghali.

Ideal Systems, agents for Apple Computer Inc., in cooperation with UKAZ (United Kingdom Alumni Club) held a quiz night at the Jordan InterContinental Hotel last Friday 21 February. The evening included dinner and was packed with participants. Questions covered a wide variety of topics and prizes were awarded to first, second and third place winners.

Dr Amin Nasser has been recently elected to the fellowship of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG). The college council elects the fellows on merit. The Admission ceremony for the new fellows will be held at the College in London, on Friday 5 June 1992.



HRH Prince Faisal ben Al Hussein patronized a celebration held on the occasion of Arbor Day at the Bsharat Golf Club in cooperation with the InterContinental Hotel. The event was attended by HRH Princess Muna in addition to a number of high ranking officials, Arab and foreign diplomats and the members of the club. Staff members of the hotel participated in planting 1992 olive trees under the slogan "Towards a Greener Jordan."



Mrs Ingrid Phillips organized last Monday a charity bridge session at the Plaza Hotel. The proceeds of the event will go in aid of a mobile cancer clinic. This clinic is designed to locate and treat children suffering from leukemia. The Plaza Hotel offered the playing hall and refreshments completely free of charge so as to minimize expenses. Mrs Phillips is currently planning for a bigger charity bridge function when she returns from a short visit to Damascus.

Jordan takes part in Puppetry festival

By Hind-Lara Mango,
Special to The Star

ELEVEN COUNTRIES participated in the Eighth International Festival for Puppetry in Tunisia in February. The six Arab countries taking part were: Lebanon, Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Yemen, and for the first time Jordan. The six member team from Jordan was headed by Wafa Qusous from the Ministry of Culture. Their puppet production "My Grandmother's Chest-tales," directed and written as part of Qusous' thesis for her masters degree, dealt with the themes of culture and heritage. In Tunisia it was commended for its original subject which was particular to its country. "Most of the other Arab participants had adapted other stories of produced plays that had nothing to do with their countries," said Qusous upon her arrival. Jordanians witnessed this show in 1990 as it toured differ-

ent areas of the country. Similarly, this show was presented in various parts of Tunisia three times, to an audience of about 300 every time. Jordanian Ambassador to Tunisia, Haydar Mahmoud and his wife attended the final show, as well as members of the Jordanian community there.

Qusous added that "we were asked to extend our stay and to perform more shows. Unfortunately, our schedule did not permit us to do so. But we had a memorable time in Tunisia where everyone was extremely cooperative and appreciative of our production."

According to Qusous, this event was very exciting and useful in that it brought together people from all over the world. Consequently, the Jordanian team proposed the idea of establishing an Arab Union for Puppetry. There were suggestions that it include only African countries in which Jordan would

be excluded, but after lengthy talks it was decided that the Union would be a body representing Arab countries in general. A temporary preparatory committee has been set up with Salah Al-Sakrah, director of the Cairo theatre for puppetry, as its president.

It was agreed that the committee would meet twice this year with the first meeting in Jordan. It was also agreed that the Union's base would be in Tunisia, since it was the only Arab country to hold festivals of this nature.

It is planned that by 1993 the Union will be officially inaugurated. The aims are of producing regular publications something similar to the Union International de la Marionnette (UNIMA) whereby yearly festivals would take place, and there would be a constant exchange of ideas. Hopes are high for introducing puppetry in education and utilizing it as a means of therapy.

Workshop on environment seeks national awareness

By Lina Arafat
Special to The Star

IT IS only within the last generation that the world community has begun to realize the sheer magnitude of threats to the global environment, and how the destruction of forests and the burning of coal and oil affect both the climate and human welfare worldwide.

This was one of the comments that were made during a one-week workshop entitled "Action Groups in Environment Protection", which was held recently by the Jordanian Society for the Control of Environmental Pollution in cooperation with the Friedrich Nauman Foundation (FNF) of Germany. The workshop was held within the framework of the National Environmental Information and Education Programme (NEIEP).

Twenty participants representing various public and private institutions in Jordan and acted as liaison officers, gathering information and promoting awareness on environmental protection in their areas.

Society Chairman, Mr Ahmad Obaidat, addressed the opening session, underlining the importance of urgent action. "Several adverse social and economic practices are causing severe damages to the environment in Jordan, and the time has come to define those responsible for this situation in a bid to prevent further deterioration," he said.

FNF has been active in Jordan for ten years now. Mr Walter

Rudel of the FNF said, "since environmental problems are being felt in many developing countries, we thought it would be a good idea to foster and stimulate the environmental movement in Jordan, providing up-to-date information on global and national issues, discussing the problems with a concerned audience and raising and stimulating environmental awareness and action."

Director of the NEIEP program, Mr Munir Adham said, "We are teaching those involved with the program to act as pressure groups to foster environmental activities and to learn how to develop without harming the environment."

Though international and national technical, legal and political approaches to resolving environmental problems are at the center of the lectures and deliberations of the NEIEP, individual participation and a change in attitudes is also stressed, as all human beings are polluters and should become environmentally conscious and concerned citizens.

The activities of the NEIEP come at a time when the first ever Earth Summit, organized by the United Nations Conference on Environmental Development (UNCED), will be taking place in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil, between 1-12 June 1992.

Due to weather conditions Agenda has been postponed

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Obituary: Alex Haley Author of black bestseller dies, aged 70

By Richard H. King

REMEMBERED IN most people's minds as the author of the bestseller *Roots*, American author Alex Haley died this month of a heart attack in a Seattle hospital, aged 70. Described by his publisher as "a fiction writer," *Roots* was published in autumn 1976. By April of the next year it had sold two million copies and won major book awards. Even as Haley was finishing the book, it was making it into a eight-part television movie. It was seen by an enormous television audience in January 1977, and was followed by a 12-hour sequel, *Roots: The Next Generation*, in February 1979.

Clearly *Roots* touched some essential chord in the American psyche at the time. Why it did so is not incomprehensible in retrospect. First, *Roots* combined the authenticity of history with the willingness of fiction to make an epic tale focusing on the story of one generation of African-Americans. Not since *Gone with the Wind* had the popular imagination been so stirred. Even more than Mrs Mitchell's popular classic, Haley's book offered a vision of the past, of hope, inspiration and degradation. In the wake of the civil rights movement, and for the first time, a popular classic was devoted to resurrecting the "lost cause" of the white South and of excavating the yet-to-be-discovered histories of African-Americans.

Roots was popular with white Americans as well. Seventy-nine per cent of the actual television audience watched the last episode of the first series. By no means a whitewash of chattel slavery nor replete with white faces of character of courage, *Roots* still moved white Americans with the story of the disruption of an African Eden by cruel European slaves, the militant freedom of a slave, Kunta Kinte, the gradual emergence of Kinte's black family in slavery and its survival into freedom after 1865. It was literally a rag to riches, the American Dream told from the black point of view, with social and moral significance added by Haley. Perhaps the "hero" of *Roots* was the family, an institution that Americans of both races saw as increasingly beleaguered.

Moreover, *Roots* traced the fascinating process by which Haley answered the question that most people, especially African-Americans, needed to ask: Where did I — where did we — come from? The story of Haley's family, the answer concluded *Roots*. At the end of the Gambian River in West Africa was not a "land of darkness" but an old and glorious (Haley) who made the distinction between stories that had been heard as a young boy in his home, Tennessee and the African homeland. The magical moment came, wrote Haley, when the griot said, "about the time the King's soldiers came... the place of the four sons, Kunta Kinte... and he was never seen again..." Haley was moved: "I sat as if I were moved of stone; My blood seemed to have congealed." Haley's greater contribution to Afro-American — and American history — and literature may have been his co-authorship of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965). Like many young black men in America, Haley found more opportunities in military



Kunta Kinte, Haley's ancestor in the 1977 film 'Roots'

cy, and black Americans, had come home.

But the criticisms, some petty and some disturbing, were not long in coming. Many black critics wondered why *Roots* had been so well received by whites. Other critics wondered if Haley hadn't simply turned *Gone with the Wind* racial stereotypes on their heads. Professional historians began calling attention to the fictional elements of the text — obviously invented dialogues and incidents — and wondered where the fact/fiction divide properly belonged. Others found historical inconsistencies, anachronisms and implausibilities.

Most damaging was the challenge from the British journalist Mark Ottaway in *The Sunday Times*. Ottaway challenged the authenticity of the story of Kunta Kinte with which the Gambian griot had first stunned Haley. In response, Haley admitted the conjectural nature of much of his historical reconstruction and offered the following justification:

"I, we, need a place called Eden. My people need a Pilgrim's Rock. I wanted to portray our original culture in its pristine state, and I know it is a fair appraisal. But you (Ottaway) are absolutely right and fair to say, however, that it was not the way Juffure (the Gambian village) then was."

Haley's greater contribution to Afro-American — and American history — and literature may have been his co-authorship of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965). Like many young black men in America, Haley found more opportunities in military

than civilian life. He spent 20 years in the US Coast Guard and turned his hand to professional journalism upon leaving in 1959. Though never a particularly political man, Haley wrote an article on the growing Nation of Islam for *Reader's Digest*. In the process Haley met his most brilliant young leader, Malcolm X, and later interviewed him. After being approached by a publisher Haley agreed to try to persuade Malcolm to collaborate on an autobiography. The portrait that emerged was one of an intelligent, appealing and very angry black man in the process of growth.

The Autobiography of Malcolm X only appeared after Malcolm's assassination in February 1965, one of the political murders of the 1960s that disfigured the political and moral landscape of the country. "He was the most eclectic personality I have ever met," concluded Haley in his Epilogue, "and I still can't quite conceive him dead."

Through Haley only completed two years of college and had no formal training as a historian, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* and *Roots* were of inestimable importance. He recorded and then popularized the impulses that lay at the heart of the cultural reawakening of black Americans in the 1960s and 1970s. *Roots* was not a great novel of historical work; but the idea behind it was a compelling one and Haley made the most of it.

Alex Palmer Haley, born New York 11 August 1921, Pulitzer Prize for Fiction 1977, died Seattle 10 February 1992.

The Independent

Exclusive Marlon Brando stars in new epic 'Christopher Columbus: The Discovery'

MOVIE LEGEND Marlon Brando has just completed his powerful performance as the Inquisitor Tomas De Torquemada in *Christopher Columbus: The Discovery*, directed by John Glen and produced by Alexander and Ilya Salkind.

The super-production also stars Tom Selleck as King Ferdinand of Spain, Rachel Ward as his Queen Isabella, and George Corraface as Christopher Columbus. They converged on Madrid with the rest of the cast and crew, who previous to this had filmed spectacular action scenes at St. John in the US Virgin Islands.

Pandemonium soon erupted in Spain as news of the presence of these superstars spread like wildfire. It didn't take long for reporters to find out where the stars were staying, and their hotel was under virtual siege. Additional security had to be employed both in the hotel and on the set. Veritable car chase scenes ensued, with dozens of pursuing press bloodhounds hot on the trail of Brando leaving the set, and battalions of others awaiting to ambush him at the hotel. Battle raged between security guards and over-enthusiastic media at the hotel. On location, special measures had to be employed to ensure that filming continued in relatively undisturbed and quality conditions in breathtaking settings.

In contrast to the ceaseless frenzied vigil outside, the silence was absolute as Brando began filming his first scenes with Sel-

leck. The driving force behind the Queen's zealous desire to bring Christianity to the world over, he is not impervious to her delicate charms — nor sympathetic to Columbus' proposed mission. Even when the intrepid explorer returns triumphant, with both converts and gold, he remains aloof and skeptical — yet grudgingly recognizes the exploit.

Handsome, charismatic George Corraface proved his star quality by giving an impressive performance and holding his own even amongst such distinguished company. Chosen by director John Glen, he was the last discovery of Sir David Lean, who had signed him to play the lead in *Nottingham*. He was also the favorite film and theater actor of director Peter Brook. Indeed, Marlon Brando is said to have been very impressed by Corraface's performance when shown footage from the film on his arrival in Madrid.

Tom Selleck is of course famous for *Magnum, P.I.* and *Three Men and a Cradle*, and English actress Rachel Ward was an overnight star after the success of *The Thornbirds*.

Academy Award winners abound on the set of this super-production: The screenplay is by John Briley, an Oscar laureate for *Gandhi*, and two-time Oscar winner Mario Puzo, whose credits include *The Godfather* and *Superman*, and, of course, Marlon Brando. In addition to the two Oscars won, he was nominated for *A Streetcar Named Des-*



Still

ire, *Viva Zapata!* and *Julius Caesar*.

Superman producers Alexander and Ilya Salkind signed on top director John Glen for *Christopher Columbus: The Discovery*. He is renowned for the five most recent Bond movies which, combined, were the biggest grossers of the series.

The three official replicas of Columbus' ships, the "Santa Maria", "Pinta" and "Niña" are used in the film, part of the contribution by the *Quinto Centenario Espana* committee, who are giving their exclusive film collaboration and assistance to the production.

Near completion, *Christopher Columbus: The Discovery* was filmed in Malta, Spain and the Virgin Islands. The film will be given a world-wide release in Summer 1992 to coincide with the 500th anniversary celebrations of the Discovery of America.

